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VALLEY FORGE.

BY

WILLIAM WESCOTT FINK.

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DEDICATED

TO

His Parents,

BY

THEIR AFFECTIONATE SON,

THE AUTHOR.

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Valley Forge.

INTRODUCTION.

NOT on the battle-field alone,
Where war's hot sulphur breath has shone
Upon the grim and ghastly dead,
Where heroes fought, and heroes bled;
Where sword and sabre clanked and clashed;
Where rifle rang and cannon crashed;
Where groan, and shriek, and yell, and cheer,
Made chaos in the frightened air—
Not on the battle-field alone
Have all heroic deeds been done.
More noble than the Spartan dead
Who fell at old Thermopylæ,
Whose deeds a deathless lustre shed

Upon the page of history:
Is he who suffers for the right,
When hope grows dim in deepening night;
When keen sleet-laden tempests dash
Upon the cold and quivering flesh;
When famine, gaunt and greedy eyed,
Laps wolf-like from the vital tide—
Noblest is he who dares to die,
A martyr for humanity,
As did the Christ on Calvary.
Go read on tombs the mystic story,
Of kingdoms sprung to sudden glory
From germs enriched with human gore—
They bloomed, they died, and were no more.
As some lone meteor, flashing down the sky,
Bursts on the gaze, and leads th' admiring eye,
Burns for a time with hectic, feverish hue,
Then, dimly glimmering, fades into the blue,
Without a spark to signal where it fell,
Or wandering wind to waft its distant knell;

Or, as wild rockets upward bounding,
The air's dark trackless billows sounding,
Quick springing to the farthest fine
Of gravitation's faultless line;
A moment poising, pendant quiver,
Burst, sparkle, and go out for ever:
They broke upon the nation's startled sight,
More brilliant for the deep surrounding night;
Into the vortex of destruction whirl'd,
Their power, their glory, vanished from the world.
Realms rocking, reeling, crashing fall,
Bury in ruins thrones, and all
The slave reared palaces of state
Which curse the poor, but glitter o'er the great!
Serfs gather treasures where the ruins fell,
The tyrant's sceptre goads him into hell;
Thrones rise obedient to the despot's nod,
But fall to dust before the breath of God.

But, oh, thank heaven! our hopes have place
Upon a surer, firmer base.

The spell that bound the bondman broke;
Long slumbering Liberty awoke,
When first our patriot fathers spoke:—
"Bow down before the oppressor's stroke?
Bow down beneath his galling yoke?
God help us! never!
Along the gory path of Mars,
They bore the glittering Stripes and Stars;
And when at last a pledge was given,
Sealed at the Justice Bar of Heaven—
A pledge? Jehovah's high decree,
That they, who fight for liberty,
Shall sing the songs of victory!
Free to the breeze their flag unfurled,
Its day-stars beaming on the world,
To shine for ever!

VALLEY FORGE.

CANTO I.

SEVENTEEN hundred and seventy-seven!
Exposed to the withering winds of heaven,
Beseiged by famine, and locked in the arms
Of snow-drifts, piled by the breath of storms,
'Twixt the desolate hills of Valley Forge,
On the Schuylkill's bleak and frozen verge,
In the dreariest camp, an army lay
And longed for the winter to pass away.

They had battled on many a blood-stained field,
Where massed battalions and legions wheeled;
Where the charge was made, and the column reeled,
They had fought for God, and their native land;

They had smitten the tyrant's sceptered hand;
They had written in blood their solemn vow:—
"The cause of right shall conquer!" But now,
They fought with a foe more fearful far
Than the fiercest chief in the lists of war—
Not where the mad waves of the battle rolled—
But they fought with famine, and fought with cold.

Their hovels in long and dreary rows,
Were thatched and covered with forest boughs;
But the winds through the sieve-like covering blew,
And the sleet, and the snow came sifting through,
Falling, and thawing, and freezing again
On the thin spread blankets of shivering men,
'Til often those pale, wan faces below,
Took the pallor of death, and lost their glow,
'Neath the deep'ning folds of their shroud of snow.

Oh! many a crimson stain of blood
Spotted the snow where bare feet trod,
To tell, like tears on the written leaf,
A silent, but terrible tale of grief.

Through many a long and bitter night,
Like a circle of ghosts, round the fitful light
Of their flickering camp-fires, cold and shivering,
Crouched half-clad men, their blue flesh quivering
With a sudden shudder, and shrink, and start,
Like the bleeding chords of a broken heart;
Not a pillow to comfort their weary heads,
Not a blanket, or handful of straw for beds;
But they slept by their fires the long night through,
Like the fabled sleep of the phantom crew;
While the wild winds wantoned their scanty rags,
Like the shattered tatters of battle flags.
And oft when the cheerless morning broke,
And the shrill reveille the camp awoke,
Where the smoldering embers their faint heat shed,
Lay the frozen form of the soldier dead.

And Famine came, and grimly glared
On the wasted forms which the battle spared;
And Pestilence followed with nauseous breath,
And breathed o'er the camp a pall of death.

Not 'till the angel shall unroll
And read from beings' faultless scroll
The vast arcana of the soul,
Shall all their sufferings be told.

Still swerved they not from duty's path,
Though leading through the vale of death,
For in their hands the destiny,
The priceless prize of liberty
Was placed by Heaven! and oh, how well
Their work was done, let freemen tell
Who reap their golden fruitage still!

Noblest of all those noble men,
Was one whom threescore years and ten,
Had only rendered still more brave
To stem the battles' deadly wave;
Had only given a truer hand
To strike a foe, or help a friend;
Had only made more doubly strong,
In love of right, and hate of wrong.

Like mountain-oak which stands alone,

Deep rooted in the crevised stone,
Where rival centuries among
His gnarled and knotted limbs have sung;
And tempests through the ages gone
Have beat upon his brow, and flown,
Leaving his stern unbending form,
Still more defiant of the storm:
He seemed, with frame-like beaten steel,
Nor hunger, heat, nor cold to feel.

Oft pressed, as oft refused to wear
The honors others sought to bear;
Scorning the ease which office got,
He shared the private's humble lot:
Grizzled, and gray, and long the beard
Fell o'er the chest of Alf Bernard;
White as the snow-flake were his hairs,
Bleached ravelings of the buried years:
And many a field inscribed its name
In scars upon his stalwart frame,
Like names of knights which live alone

Deep lettered in the living stone,
'Till from their hieroglyphic lore
He read his battles o'er and o'er,
Tracing along his hundred scars,
The footprints of unnumbered wars:

"Here, Merwin died.—Here, Braddock fell.—
Here, painted fiends—ha ha! full well
We paid the yelling pack of hell,
In many a boastful leader slain,
And,—well they'll never fight again!
And here,— oh! how the hot flames rolled!
The snows were deep, the winds were cold,
We little dreamed the foe was near,
Until his war whoop rent the air,
As though a thousand demon throats
Discordant shrieked their hellish notes,
Just as the night held deepest sway,
Before the coming of the day.

"We sprang to arms! But see, the night
Rolled backward from the lurid light

Of all the village wrapped in fire;
The wild flames lashing, leaping higher,
Like mad waves by a whirlwind tossed,
Glared on us fiercely. All was lost!

"Out from the burning's blighting glow,
The flames behind; before, the foe,
Rushed all the people of the town,
Out where the savage cut them down,
Regardless of the silvered hair,
The tender babe, the maiden's prayer,
Intent to prove his bloody boast
With scalps, that he had slain the most.
Through maiden curls the hatchet flashed;
The infant's blood on mothers splashed;
Sons saw their gray-haired mothers fall,
And heard their bleeding fathers call;
Lovers beheld their loved ones die,
Moaning in death's last agony;
O'er the red field the warriors rushed,
And drove the knife where hot blood gushed.

"But still we fought with all the zeal
Which frenzied men alone can feel,
Who see with starting eyes the blood
Of kindred gush in crimson flood.

"Oh! many a warrior on that day
Beside his murdered victim lay;
And many a dark-souled child of hell,
Never returned again to tell
Of daring deeds in boastful strain,
Or flaunt the scalp-locks of his slain.

"But they were many, we were few;
Our numbers thin, and thinner grew,
Until it seemed at last we stood
Like targets for the arrowy flood,
Which swept across that field of blood.

"A yell! A shriek! I looked around,
And saw a fiend like lightning bound
Upon a young and tender girl;
His tomahawk above her whirl;
Fiercely he clutched her golden hair,

Lifted his weapon high in air—
Oh, heavens! To see that blade descending!
Quick, all my power within me bending,
I stopped his hand but half way down,
And laid him lifeless on the ground.
Then taking up her fallen form,
I bore her through the deadly storm,
While closely as a child she clung,
—Oh, she was beautiful, and I was young!"
He shivered with a sudden start
As though an arrow pierced his heart.
Ah, Alf Bernard! what mystery
Is woven with thy history?
"I said I bore Evangeline,"—
He checked himself—"the girl I mean—
Across the field,
While all around, before, behind,
Their hissing arrows cut the wind.
They rushed upon me, for the prize
I bore was tempting in their eyes;

God nerved my arm that trying hour,
With more than merely mortal power.
They rushed upon me, with a blow
I laid the foremost leader low.
Still struggling onward, as they came
The fate they suffered was the same;
Until at last, upon my face,
—This ugly scar still marks the place—
There fell a crashing blow. The blood
Gushed from my temple in a flood;
I staggered, reeled;
One thing alone or we had died,
That scared heart throbbing at my side,
Nerved me to action, and again
I felt the vigor of a man.

"We reached the wood, while like a pack
Of hungry wolves, upon the track
Of some poor wretch, with whoop and yell
Like demons at a carnival,
They followed us, until the night,

Contrasted with the glaring light,
Grew doubly black and hid our flight.
Five miles away
A fortress lay,
And just at the early break of day,
Trembling and weak from loss of blood,
In sight of the outer walls I stood,
And faintly called, I could do no more;
The girl—the delicate girl I bore—
Had swooned away an hour before,
I deemed from fear, but too well I knew
That my failing strength must bear us through,
So I dared not pause. They heard my call;
I saw them coming, and that was all,
For I sank to the earth and knew no more,
Except that friends were bending o'er,
And I thought they said,—though I scarcely heard—
'Poor girl she's wounded!" Old Alf Bernard
Stopped sharply short, but his pallid cheek
Told a story his lips refused to speak;

As a smothered sigh will oft unfold,
With a vividness language does not hold,
The hidden billows of grief which roll
O'er the secret depths of the troubled soul.

Wondering they stood, those sturdy men,
To see that sudden look of pain;
That deadly pallor on the brow
Of him who ever until now,
Had seemed like one who only knows
Grief, through the sight of other's woes.

They loved him, for his love was given,
Free as the welcome dews of heaven;
Sharing their sorrows and their joys,
He called them young and old—his boys.
They reverenced him, old Alf Bernard,
His snowy locks, and long gray beard,
His furrowed cheeks all battle-scarred.

They feared him; for his arm was strong,
And quick his ire against the wrong.

They feared him; for he seemed to them

The remnant of a race of men,
Who lived far back in days of yore,
Possessed of more than wizard power
In battle's wild and fearful hour.
He seemed to them, all gray and hoary,
Like some old seer of ancient story;
He seemed above them, proudly stern;
They little deemed his heart could burn
With passions. E'en his smiles partook
Of feelings chiseled in the rock.

He turned a moment to conceal
The anguish which his looks revealed:
The pallor vanished, and again
He stood before that group of men,
Proud, cold, and calmly stern as ever.
The trembling lip had ceased to quiver;
But still the lines which age drew o'er
His face, seemed deeper than before,
As channels down the mountain side,
Grow deeper with the rushing tide

Of sudden torrents, quickly gone,
Cut in the mountain's face of stone.

You cannot unravel the woof of a life
That is woven in sorrow and toil and strife,
For its warp is mystery;
And the heart is closed to the vulgar stare,
For the inner life is buried there
In unwritten history.
You may search and search it o'er and o'er,
For its hidden dross and buried lore;
But all in vain, for the mould and dust
Of withered hopes, and the cankering rust,
Grown deep with the tears of the buried years,
Have covered its fibre and chords; but still
Those chords will start, and quiver, and thrill
With the thoughts of the Long Ago—
Will start, and quiver, and thrill with pain,
As the scenes of the past come back again,
But its anguish none can know.

Oh! say ye not that the cold and stern

Have never known what it is to yearn
For a heart to love, or a hand to smooth
The aching brow, or words to soothe
The anguish that burned from day to day
Into their very souls, nor say,
Their eyes are unused to weeping.
For deep in their hearts there are smothered groans;
And deep in their souls there are muffled moans,
As sad as the saddest æolian tones,
Or the wail of the winds o'er the burial stones,
Which watch where the dead are sleeping.

On the mountain there lies a shroud of snow,
But a cauldron of fire burns below.
In that castle so old, and cold, and grim,
There are happy women and joyous men.

There's a beautiful cottage clad in vines,
Where the summer sun on the myrtle shines,
Where the ivy's tendrils are creeping;
But in spite of those clustering vines and bloom,
Within is a sombre cloud of gloom:

There is Death—and a mother weeping.

And so it is with the life of man,
He laughs in sorrow and smiles in pain,
Fears death but still is brave;
Though his heart is warm his words are cold,
Though his hopes are high, he is growing old—
He'll soon be in his grave!

CANTO II.

Wild, wild, the winds! and far and wide,
Loud shrieked they when the old year died,
And driving, whirling, madly down,
Dashed sleet upon his naked crown,
As if, impatient of delay,
They sought to hurry him away.
He bowed his head—his thin rags fluttering
Let in the cold—but only muttering:

"My days are done;" no murmur uttering,
He grasped his few remaining sheaves,
And sank among his fallen leaves.

The New Year, vigorous and strong,
Nor weeps, nor mourns his parent long;
Buoyant with life, he longs to grasp
The reins of sovereignty, and clasp
The sceptre of the circling days.—
The year on which all wond'ring ages gaze.

From out the frost-dimmed East, he leads
His wild ungovernable steeds,
And quickly bounding in his sleigh,
Letting his whip of tempests play
With furious lashings, blow on blow,
Whirls Westward o'er a world of snow.

The New Year's morn was wild and cold.
Two fiery sun-dogs upward rolled,
Frost-breathing sentries of the sun,
Beside his chariot wheels to run.
The sun rose red through frost-clouds, driven

Along the dreary wastes of heaven.
Innumerable points of light,
With all prismatic colors bright,
Crimson and purple, red and white,
Formed varied landscapes hung on high,
Frost Islands in a sea of sky.

The snows lie deep at Valley Forge,
Drifted, and piled in cut and gorge;
While narrow and deep from door to door,
And often by bare feet hurried o'er,
Or up to the long hill's distant brow
To the picket post; or down below
Where the Schuylkill's ice-roofed waters flow,
Angling and white the footpaths go,
Like the long drawn lines which the spider weaves,
To fasten her web to distant leaves;
But deepest, and broadest, that which led
Where the suffering buried their painless dead!
How cheerless! nor the light of smiles
The cold, bleak, gloomy day beguiles.

How desolate! no ruddy light
From blithesome hearth-stones beaming bright;
No new year's feast, with dainties spread
By womens' fingers, but instead,
A quarter ration—coarse dry bread!

How oft, on new year's mornings gone,
They'd sought the old New England home,
Children, and children's children there,
Returning to the gray haired pair,
Whose warm benignant faces shone
With welcome on each coming one!
What joy, in homes of peace and thrift
To give the simple new year's gift;
Or hear once more the patriarch bless
The long expected new year's feast!

The feast! Ah me! Too well I know
The soldier's thoughts will wandering go,
When weak with hunger, stiff with cold,
Back to the full, warm feasts of old!

The feasts, the happy feasts, when mirth

Danced light-like o'er the fruits of earth!
The joyous, gladsome new year's day,
When age and childhood met in play,
And deemed it, with its wealth of cheer,
The happiest day in all the year!
Alas how changed! The dreary day
Wore grimly, silently away;
Instead of song, or mingled hum
Of happy voices, rolled the drum;
While ever and anon a note,
Heavy and deep from out the throat
Of dark mouthed cannon coldly grim,
Loud boomed the new year's christening.
New-born of time! What depths of fate
Within thy laboratories wait,
To roll around us?—Seventy-eight!
What Delphic oracle may read
The fate which deeply darkens o'er us?
Shall freedom falter, freemen bleed,
And fall like those who fell before us?

Shall Liberty be put to flight
From fields her dying sons made gory,
And leave oppression's rayless night,
To cloud at once their graves and glory?

Shall tears, and blood, and death be vain?
Shall strengthening bonds still tighten 'round us,
While hopelessly we clank the chain,
And cursing, serve the power that bound us?

How glooms his mind with boding fears,
Who struggling stems the rushing river
Above the cataract, and hears
Its waves which rave and roar forever!

How glooms his mind with boding fears,
Whose country's fate looms dark before them;
And looking down the course of years,
They see destruction brooding o'er them!

How still the camp! Few murmurs broke
From out those hungry lips, nor spoke

Those weary veterans of the thought,
With deep forebodings doubly fraught,
Which filled their minds; for well they knew
The power of sympathy, and how,
Woe uncontrolled which cloud-like rolls
O'er one, will shadow other souls.
Brave men, and noble, thus apart
To lock that sorrow in the heart,
Your own fierce burning thoughts repressed,
To keep hope burning in the breast
Of others, who alas! like you,
Have felt the same forebodings too.
How still the camp! As just before
The "vollied thunder," and the roar
Of battle, or Destruction swoops
Her war-cloud pinions o'er the troops,
Ere yet the first far shrieking shell,
From field or wood or citadel,
Comes screaming on, and breaks the spell,
Where bristling arms and banners shine,

Deep silence falls along the line;—
And men who never flinch or quail
In battle, tremble and grow pale;
A silence, silent as the tomb,
Preluding death, portending doom,
Thus grew the camp as silently
They brooded o'er the destiny.
So wrapped in doubt the new born year
Might usher in. They well could bear
Their soldier lot, and scanty fare;
But ah, what gloomy thoughts will fill
The mind, when naught but direful ill
Hangs o'er one's country! Slow the sun
Behind dim frost-clouds settled down.
Night came. Without a crust of bread
The soldier sought his cheerless bed.
He sleeps a feverish sleep. Bright dreams,
Like cloud-born rainbows, throw their beams
Of pseudo coloring before his eyes,
With pictured joys instead the miseries

Which gave them birth. And thus in sleep
While chilling tempests o'er him sweep,
The soldier dreams:—The din and roar
Of battle-fields, are heard no more.
Peace rules the land. The harvest song,
By summer breezes borne along,
Comes mingled with the measured beat
Of reapers in the fields of wheat;—
Scenes quickly change, and quick as thought
He sits by baskets, heavy laden
With rarest food by brothers brought,
From far off home, his eyes to gladden.
And then upon his ear there comes
The heavy boom of sudden battle;
Quick roll the long alarum drums;
The cannons shriek; the muskets rattle,
And downward plunge the bursting bombs:
He grasps his gun;—he seeks the line;—
A thousand flashing muzzles shine:
In surging waves the foes come on,

They check not, falter not before him;—
He sees his own weak ranks borne down;—
And hears their sabres clanking o'er him;
They trample him; he struggles, bleeds,
Beneath the feet of charging steeds.
But lo! the hidden magazine
Explodes, and rends the world asunder—
The valleys yawn; the hills careen—
With one terrific burst of thunder,
The quaking sky above is riven,
Foeman and friend are upward driven,
In one mixed mass of ruin whirled,
Up, upward from the lessening world,
A globe appearing fast decreasing,
'Til laws of gravitation ceasing,
He buoyant sails along the heaven;—
Ha, ha, how jubilant, how free,
Thus basking in an ether sea!
And now at length he comes again
To where those subtle laws begin;

Slowly he sinks, but faster still,
Until the sad winds moan and wail
Around him faster, till the air
Whistles and cuts through eye and ear!
Faster, still faster, till it shrieks,
And fiery friction burns his cheeks!
The flames burst o'er him! Madly onward!
Like some huge meteor plunging downward,
He draws behind a fiery trail
Of wild flames, lashing, roaring o'er him;
The swelling world grows big before him,
'Til charred, consumed, with one wild wail
The flames go out, he hurtles down
A smoking cinder on the ground!
Oh, burning thirst! Oh furnace breath!
Oh withering parching voiceless death!
But lo! a slender waving bough
Bends o'er him, all its leaves aglow
With glittering globes of honey dew!
And lower, lower, lower dipping,

Its sweetened lulling dewdrops dripping,
Bring cool forgetfulness. The sound
Of music softly floats around;
A shadow falls. The scene is changed;
He scales the hills he 'd oftimes ranged
In childhood's days, and longs to share,
The honors and the toils of war.
Another change: and now a lover,
He lives the happy moments over,
When, forth from some New England home,
He 'd wandered down the shaded river,
Not lonely, but with *her* alone,
And felt the warm hand throb, and quiver,
As came the promised "Thine forever."
He started, woke. The fire gleamed;
But sinking back again, he dreamed, —
Of Cornucopia, golden horn,
Voluptuous as the lips of morn,
Deep blushing back the roseate tints
Of bride-like flowers, which June imprints

With vernal kisses, breathing low
But warming to a tender glow ;
Of Cornucopia, generous sign
Of blessings from the hand Divine,
Crowded with viands to the brim,
And nectar pendant from the rim ;
Of cellars filled with centuried wines,
From far Eutopia's tender vines ;
Of banquet spread upon the green
In honor of some fairy queen,
In climes than Orient more fair,
Balmy as lotus laden air :
Bright blushing fruits in flower capped cones
Concentered from the summer zones ;
Flesh of the tenderest of the flock ;
Bird from the air, and fish from brook ;
All that the hungriest could desire,
Prepared above a spicewood fire,
Whose savory scent toward heaven ascending,
With breath of orange blossoms blending,

Filled all the branches o'er them bending.
Nor famished wretch could long for more;
What e'er he wished was placed before
His hungry gaze. The feast was spread;
A strange, wild incantation said;
And then the queen arising spake:—
"Welcome are all! let all partake!
The feast is full; the feast is free;
And if there one among us be
Of foreign birth,
Let him be seated nearest me,
Fed with the dainties of the sea,
The tend'rest fruitage of the tree,
The air, the earth:
Be he our cherished, honored guest,
By every blessing doubly blest;
Oh! may the moment ne'er be seen,
Lov'd lords and ladies of the green,
When in our groves by grief unhaunted,
By spirit mysteries enchanted,

We fail to guard from death or danger,
Who comes to us a peaceful stranger."
The fragrance from the feast distilled,
With joy his swelling nostrils filled;
But fanned anew his hunger's fire,
Kindled more strong his keen desire,
As amorous whispers, murmured low,
Rouse a youth's passion to a glow.
The queen, with blushing finger tips,
Raised a full goblet to her lips:—
"Here's blooming health to thee and thine!"
And quaffed the merry, dancing wine.

Then he—with goblet raised in hand:—
"Here's to the queen of fairy land!
May her domain of wildwood bloom!
Her flowers garner soft perfume!
Her's the fair light of stars and sun,
Falling like sifted silver down,
In dew drops on her laurel crown!"
He tipped his glass, when upward rolled

A glittering cloud like vapor'd gold,
Or like the soft wing'd gossamer,
Star voyager of the upper air,
Or like the fountain's rising mist
By rainbow crescent arms embraced;
The wine evaporate sought the sky,
And left the tempting goblet dry.
The bread he vainly strove to clutch,
Crumbled to dust before his touch.
Whatever to his lips he placed,
Vanished alike in form and taste. —
He closed his lips on nothingness,
Like one who in his dreams would press
The phantom form of friend departed,
But finds, alas! his effort thwarted,
By his uncertain dim ideal,
In seeming true, but all unreal.
And all the more the famine raged
Within, and could not be assuaged,
'Til, fired to fury, hot of blood,

He rushed to clutch the flying food:
The spitted bird, the crisped fish,
The juicy fruit, the savory dish,
Whatever on the green might be
Of silver, gold, or ivory,
Without a clash, or clink, or sound,
Sank suddenly beneath the ground.
Fairies and queen had disappeared,
With hurtling shriek like frighten'd bird.
Cold icy floods seemed o'er him streaming;
Demoniac voices round him screaming;
Startled he woke. The vision fled;
And stretched upon a cheerless bed,
On which the sifting snows were falling,
He heard a little drummer calling,
In childish accents sweetly sad: —
"Mother, please mother, give me bread!"

Oh Dreams! cruel Dreams! why mock ye our sorrow,
With visions of pleasure supernally fair?

Ye promise the dying a healthful to-morrow,
But the hopes ye enkindle ye quench in despair.

In the land of the stranger the wanderer dreaming,
On the swift wings of fancy, returns to his home;
To his wife, and his children, rejoicingly seeming,
With fond arms extended, to beckon him—"Come!"

All the love of a husband and parent, is burning
For the dear ones who welcome him home to his rest,
And anxiously, hurriedly, heart-fondly yearning,
He rushes to press them once more to his breast:

But his arms enfold nothingness—nothingness clasping!
Have they vanished in air; are they folded in clouds?
See, he starteth back frigidly, tremblingly gasping,
For dead at his feet they lie wrapp'd in their shrouds!

Oh, ye Dreams! cruel Dreams! false mirage of our slumber,
Floating Liberty's spectral flag o'er the slave,
In his breast ye enkindle bright hopes without number,
Which vanish like bubbles that burst on the wave.

Bound in fetters and chains, the poor convict is sleeping
In the dungeon's deep gloom, with damp rocks 'neath his head;
But again he's a child, and his mother is keeping
Love's lullaby vigils, beside his soft bed.

While in sweetest and tenderest tones, she is singing:
"Sleep sweetly, God's angels are guarding thee now.
Sleep sweetly; their harpstrings above thee are ringing,"
She stoops to imprint a warm kiss on his brow.

She is gone! like the mists of the morn disappearing;
She is gone! and he struggles to clasp her in vain;
Chilling hands hold him fast, and with starting eyes staring,
He awakes to the clashing and clank of his chain.

Oh, look ye! a traveler, reeling and panting,
Brain whirling, blood burning, lips parching, sinks down
In those furnace-like desert sands, famishing, fainting;
No water! no shadow! but sand, sand alone!

Sand, sand, endless sand, where the 'glaring eye turning,
Sees no shrub on the earth, not a cloud in the sky;
Sand, sand, unconsumed but for evermore burning
In the sun's scorching rays drifting down from on high!

On the shoreless wild wastes of that desert, are glimmering,
The skulls of bleached skeletons, laughing at death;
And from their white surfaces tremblingly shimmering,
Beat back the hot waves of the sand's heated breath.

But his feverish fancy is fertile of shadows;
Springs liquidly laugh as they gush from the land;
The coolest of rivers flow deep through the meadows,
And he rushes to drink, but they sink in the sand!

Oh Dreams! cruel Dreams! Your bright visions of heaven,
But sink the doomed spirit the deeper in hell;
The bark of your hopes on the wild reef is riven;
And the close of your song is a moan and a knell!

CANTO III.

'Twas night, nor light of moon, nor distant star,
Shone on the mantled earth. Where towering trees
Their long and leafless branches spread afar,
Which swayed, and wailed, and sighed in every breeze,
Lifting their column'd stateliness in air,
Like pillars for the firmament of leaves,
Revolving summer brings,--a picket fire
Crackled, and roared, and blazed, and mounted higher,
As ever and anon tall brawny forms
Heaped on the fagots, carried in their arms
From out the folds of darkness doubly black,
Which curled and rolled and deepen'd, crowded back
Farther within themselves, until they stood
As if supported by the pillar'd wood,
Defiant of the light from which they fled,
A pitchy wall around—a canopy o'er head.

The snow upon the frozen ground
Is packed, and tramped the fire around;
Four bristling stacks of arms—and bright
Their bayonets sparkle in the light;
A floor of twigs, on which are spread
A few torn blankets for a bed.
Twelve private soldiers; three, who wear
The non-commissioned badge, and share
The trials of the camp—stern men,
And deeply graven lines of pain
Upon their pallid faces, show
The footprints of an untold woe:
No semblance to a uniform
Their garments bear, so worn, and torn,
That when the fitful night-winds blow
The tattered rags apart, they show
The white and shivering flesh below.
And yet, they laugh and sing their songs,
Or, warming with their country's wrongs,
They vow:—"By help of God and Heaven,

The dastard foe shall yet be driven
Back to their dens, 'til none remain,
A curse-mark on our country's fame!"
Beside the sparkling fire stands,
Warming his white and ungloved hands,
An officer, whose costly dress
Seems strange in contrast with the rest.
A flashing sword is by his side;
A scarf of silk around him tied;
A diamond glitters on his breast;
His foot in narrow boot compressed;
His hair, luxuriant as a girl's,
Falls down his neck in jaunty curls:
And now he twirls his long mustache,
Or deftly whirls his silken sash,
Or drumming on his sabre hilt,
Where diamonds glitter through the gilt,
He looks with discontented air
Out through the night, and at the fire,
Or at th' unostentatious band,

He deems no honor to command.
Why his unrest, and who is he?
A petted child of luxury;
A soldier from the hope of glory,
Misguided by the half-told story
Which gives the battle's victory shout,
But leaves the death and danger out;
A sunshine patriot; a stranger
To all except romance of danger:
Like one who chafes to reach the crest
Where glory's glittering crown is seen,
Before his weary feet have pressed
The toilsome steeps which lie between,
He thought to wear the laurel wreath,
Before his sword had left its sheath.
Without the sturdy yeoman zeal,
—The tried, refined, attempered steel,
Full tough in woe as bright in weal—
He faltered, when instead of bays,
Of wooed Promotion's tinsel blaze,

There came long months of sore distress,
Dull waiting, dreary weariness.

But other spirits discontented,
By mutual evil bonds cemented,
Have formed a league, a plot invented—
To fan the fire of mutiny
By slow and subtle calumny,
Until its furies burst upon
Their peerless chieftain, Washington.

A member of the league is he,
The captain of the guard to-night,
Who stands so discontedly
Where brightly beams the picket light.
His mind is dark: How dark his thought,
With more than serpent venom fraught,
Who deeply plans to lead astray
A soul from Virtue's spotless way,
Or seeks, with Treason's poison darts,
To blast and blacken loyal hearts!—
His mind is dark; as oft revolving

The problem difficult of solving,
How best by passion, and by reason,
He may implant the germs of treason.
He feels the serpent's love of ill,
Yet may he lack the serpent's skill.
The sparks dance upward merrily—
The firelight sparkles cheerily;
But hark! A voice rings wild and clear,
Deep, rich, and full, and swells and floats
A cadence of sonorous notes,
In sound-waves through the listening air,
'Til answering echoes every where,
The trees and lonely hills among,
Roll back the burden of the song.
Beside the fire the singer stands,
No minstrel harp is in his hands;
No walls around, no roof of gold,
No damask curtains, fold on fold;
No stage, with wealth of drapery,
No brilliant scenes, no tapestry.

No audience who breathless hear
His wondrous song and laud his powers,
Who give the loud approving cheer,
And cover him with floods of flowers.
His stage—the snowy, frozen ground;
His hearers stand in silence round;
His harp—responsive solitudes;
His audience room—the gloomy woods;
Its drapery—the darkness spread
In rayless folds above his head.
Through all the woods the music rings;
A song of liberty he sings.
The captain turns him scornfully:
"Yes! prate and sing of liberty;
Sing 'til you'r hoarse, she'll hear your songs;
Perchance she'll help avenge your wrongs!
Sing! will these naked forests hear you?
Sing! will these cheerless valleys cheer you?
Sing of your Washington; aye, sing
Until you make the welkin ring!

The people murmur and demand
The foe be driven from the land;
But yet this *hero* dares refuse,
Because—'My soldiers lack for shoes.'
And says: 'Their destitute condition,
From want of clothing and provision,
Unfits them for a long campaign.'
What reason that, that we remain
In this vile camp? Wise leader he
Who starves his men through charity!
But some might perish in the snows;
I'll grant as much—but then, suppose
We lose a thousand from the cold,
What then? Among the men enrolled
So small a loss could not be told.
What matter if a private dies?
Dead soldiers don't demand supplies.
Accurs'd inaction! here we stay,
And pass the weary months away,
While Philadelphia guards the foe

In cheery walls from cold and snow,
And feeds them with the best of food,
And makes their bright and sparkling blood
Grow warm with wine, and dance along
Attimed to joyous buoyant song.
A *sloth*, a *coward* holds command,
Or we had swept them from the land."

What towering form is that which stands
Within the shadow of yon tree,
With head inclined, with folded hands,
Unseen by all the company?
With ample chest, and powerful limb,
And eyes that glitter neath a brow
Heavy, o'erhanging, sternly grim;
The flashing fire discloses now
His bearded face, all tanned and scarred,
And long gray locks—'tis Alf Bernard.
A wondrous brilliance gleams beneath
That shaggy brow, and deep the breath
Comes forced between the close-shut teeth.

The captain stands with eyes askance,
Nor hears that breath, nor sees that glance.
Around him silent stand his men
With moody lowering brows; but then,
What cares he for the brows that lower?
The glittering bauble, badge of power,
The talisman upon his shoulder
Which makes the foe a charmed beholder,
—A charmed beholder when that foe
Is subject in the ranks below—
Is full protection; no one dare
To contravene an officer.
"Hark ye, my men," he says, "no one
But coward will endure so long,
Disgraced command like this; but list!
Another fortnight will divest
Stupidity of power, and then
Will glory crown our arms again.
The plot is laid, and nobly planned,
Ha! How the news will thrill the land,

When Gates, the hero, takes command.
One thing alone must yet be done;
United action! every one
Must so accord with all the rest,
There'll be no power to resist.
A single blow!" — "Traitor, beware!"
Rolls out upon the midnight air
A solemn voice: "Beware, beware!"
The captain startles, grasps his sword,
Whirls on his men— "Who spoke that word!
Who calls *me* traitor, and who dare
To threaten *me*, 'Beware, beware'?
Speak, and I'll smite you where you stand!"
He lifts his bickering blade in hand.
"Hold" came the voice. From out the wood
A giant apparation strode:
"I spoke that word. I, Alf Bernard,
I called thee traitor, and I dared
To threaten thee—Beware, beware!
So strike ye, strike, the mark is fair!

Strike, strike, and 'smite me where I stand'!
Why falter with uplifted hand?"
What sudden power has fear? That brow,
Anon so flushed, is pallid now;
As towers that hoary form before him,
Surprise and trembling fear creep o'er him,
As looking in that eye of fire
The tall form seems to tower higher;
The lips seem cut in steel—the breast
Heaves with emotions yet repressed:
As looking in that eye of fire
He feels its deadly serpent charm
Which rivets him with hushed alarm,
And moveless makes his lifted arm.
Up speaks Bernard:—
"Strike, or thy men
May laugh when thou shalt draw again.
Coward! put down that sword. No harm
Could ever issue from thine arm
To him who met thee face to face.

Within some secret, hidden place,
Beneath the shadow of the night,
By cunning stealth, perchance ye might
Slay sleeping babes. Put down that hand,
Ye craven mockery of command!
I would not soil these hands of mine,
Which never struck but open foe,
With cringing coward blood like thine."
—The captain dropped his hand—" But know,
Enough this night I've heard, to tear
Those epaulets which thou dost wear,
From off thy shoulders, and to hang
Thy worthless carcass from yon limb.
Dost think to hide thy traitor shame
With gold, or epaulets, or name?
Ye glitter in authority—
A private I, but in thy face
I shake this hoary beard, and place
The stigma of thy treachery,
Foiled mutiny and black disgrace
Upon thy name, upon thy race.

What art thou, wretch? What hast thou done,
What battles fought, what victories won,
What knowledge holds thy shallow brain,
Of camp, or field, or long campaign,
That thou shouldst here presume to arraign
The noble Washington?
I've seen him in the thick of fight,
When cowards like thyself had fled
Half stupefied with sheer affright.
I've seen him where a Braddock bled;
And oh! it was a gallant sight,
When British soldiers turned and fled,
To see him struggle o'er his dead,
Dashing the foe from left to right,
'Til gory fields grew doubly red;
While madly round his stately form—
Ha! how he towered clad in blue!
A storm of deadly missiles flew,
But heaven protected him from harm;
And by his skill and valiant hand

He saved the remnant of his band.
Oh, never to the sons of men
Will such a chief be born again!
Ye called him coward. Villain! I
Do call thee liar! By this beard,
And by the name of Alf Bernard,
If e'er again such thing be heard
From out thy mouth, then thou shalt die!

"What art thou, wretch? What hast thou done,
That thou shouldst speak of Washington
As sloth? I've seen him when the fight
Was over, and the longed for night
Brought worn and tired soldiers rest;
His weary head no pillow pressed;
No rest for him; but all night long
He moved the sleeping camps among;

"He roused the drowsy sentinel:
Inspected cannon, powder, shell;
Then, visiting the hospital;—
Oh, sad is war, and sad the sight,

To see them by the sickly light
With upturned faces, ghastly white,
In long straight rows! — He bent above
The wounded with a woman's love—
Love deeper than a woman's love—
He brush'd aside a tear of sorrow,
And whispered: —

'Rest and Heaven bless you!
God helping us, we will redress you!
Sleep my brave men, and good betide you!
Too soon may others lie beside you,
For we must battle on the morrow!'

"And then with slow and measured tread,
With folded arms and bow'd head,
Backward and forward by the guns,
He walked for hours all alone.
The moon went down behind the hill; —
The sentry saw him walking still;
The darkness hid his form from sight,
But ceaseless through the dead of night

Was heard the slow and measured beat
Of Washington's unwearied feet:
And thus ere night had passed away
He planned the battle of the day
Which came and gave us victory.

"I've seen him on the field of blood;
I've seen him on the raging flood;
I've seen him in the cheerless camp;
With naught except a mantle 'round him,
Lie down where night and duty found him,
On beds of granite cold and damp;
Lie down beside his weary men,
Because he chose to share their pain: —
Oh never to the sons of men
Will such a chief be born again!

"Ye plot his fall: Young man beware!
The huntsman often springs his snare,
And finds, too late, the unlucky elf,
His game is but his worthless self.

"Ye talk of marching on the foe;

Well may'st thou talk of that, since thou
Art warmly clad; but look ye how
These men who stand around thee now,
Are shivering with cold.

"Oh! keenly cuts the crusted snow,
And bitter winds in winter blow,
And many a gallant name, I know,
Will vanish from the roll.
I've wintered on the wild bleak shore
Of northern lakes, and heard the roar
Of hollow tempests howling o'er;
I've heard the wolf's growl at the door;
But what the soldiers now endure!
Such storms I never saw before,
Although I'm growing old.
Be justice done! More noble he
Who suffers in obscurity,
For freedom, unrepiningly;
Than he who leads to victory,
Emblazoned with authority,

And glittering with gold!
Yet how they bear their misery
Awakes anew the hope in me,—
My native land may yet be free,
Before my days are told.
My native land! My bosom thrills,
To think me of thy woods and hills;
Thy mountain bands like ribs of steel,
Where all untamed the eagles wheel;
Thy prairies, billowed by the breeze;
Thy rivers, rolling to the seas:
How thrills an old man's heart, ah, me!
To think me when thy hills among,
The free and fearless song I've sung,
In years long gone, when I was young!
Yes, yes, I know thou wilt be free,
Before my days are told.

"Young man, your plot will fail; beware!
Nor rouse the lion from his lair!
I've warned you well,—beware, beware!"

A gust of wind came through the wood;
The fire burn'd low; and where they stood,
A cloud of curling smoke was blown,
And when it lifted, Alf was gone:
But as they stood all wond'ring there,
That word the echoes seemed to bear
Through darkling wood, on hollow air,
With deep and distant voice—"Beware!"

As one who walks the narrow crest
Of some wild cliff which towers o'er
The breakers, as they beat and roar,
Against a torn and granite shore;
Who walks the awful giddy crest
Which none but eagles' feet have press'd,
No wider than his hand,
Where but a breath a sudden blown,
A treacherous step, a rolling stone,
Would dash him on the strand—

Yet in his arms he bears a child;
He tore it from the eagle's nest;
He clasped it to his throbbing breast:
But hark, the eagles! Shrieking wild,
They scream defiance from on high;
They circle o'er their enemy;
A moment poise, a moment gleam,
Then, flashing like an arrow's beam,
Come screaming down the sky!
They dash upon him. With their wings
They beat him, and with gory beaks
They rend his flesh, they tear his cheeks;
Still closely to the child he clings,
Nor dare a moment lift his arm
To beat them from his bleeding form;
For should his watchfulness decrease,
His jealous arms a moment cease
To clasp his child, like leaden weight
'Twould fall, down, down the giddy height,
A thousand dizzy meters down,

Down from the awful crags that loom,
Down, down where bursting billows boom,
'Til shivered on the lithean wave,
Foam, crimson tinged, would mark its grave;
And he, the sire, in wild endeavor,
Would leap to save, and sink forever:
As one thus tott'ring on the crest,
All torn and mangled by the foe,
Yet clasps his offspring to his breast,
Tho' dark destruction yawns below, —
So Washington, fair Freedom's son,
Of all her chiefs the chosen one,
Bore in his arms her darling child:
Below were Slavery's breakers surging;
Above, around, like rays converging,
Came black-winged slanders blindly wild,
Whirled 'round with reviling shrieks,
And tore him with their venomed beaks;
Nor dared he ward him from their blows,

However fierce, it would expose
His precious charge to deadlier foes.
Oh! who can bear the bitter stings
Which point and poison Slander's wings?
Who, the more deep than sabre thrust,
That subtlest wound, a friend's distrust?
More withering than a foe's derision,
The virus of a friend's suspicion?
What chief who on the field of strife,
'Mid clashing columns risks his life,
To bear his country's banner high,
And crown her there with victory,
Can yet endure but calumny,
From those for whom he fought?
His truest actions wrongly viewed,
His purest motives misconstrued,
His struggles counted naught?
Ah, he alone whose spirit burning
With essence of diviner things,
Still truer grows with bitterest spurning,

As harps grow sweeter with the turning
Of keys which stretch the tensive strings!
Ah, he alone whose spirit thrills
With love, too deep for selfish pleasures,
Whose mind his country's welfare fills,
Whose boding thought her future measures;
Who dare receive the deadly dart,
Swift driving to his country's heart!
Few have there been—like this I ween,
But such an one—was Washington.

CANTO IV.

'Twas morning; but the distant sun
Seemed shivering in a frozen sky,
Though passing bright to look upon,
Its incandescence came not nigh,
But only seemed to flash, and quiver

An imaged sun in crystal river,
A bright coquette with charmed devise,
With look of love, with heart of ice.
The forest twigs were all embossed
With myriad globes of beaded frost,
Until they gleamed, a million spires,
All brilliant with their crystal fires;
Or pendent flashed as stalactites
With countless scintillating lights.
The snows were crisped; and, in the camp,
Beneath the soldiers' toilsome tramp,
They shrilled like microtonic bells—
Like frost-bells, infin'tesimals—
A chime of tinkling tones harmonic,
Minutest tones, yet telephonic.
And had these beauties came betimes
When all was mirth, and all were gay,
Those crystal spires, those frost-bell chimes,
The tinkling of their mimic rhymes,
The flashing of frost-ocean's spray;

They had not failed of wonted praise:
Ah, beauty, born of bitter days,
Is Hymen at the funeral rite,
Ill-timed and shocking to the sight.

That morning, when they formed the guard,
They called the name of Alf Bernard:
"No, no!" a brave young soldier said,
"He must not go; take me instead;
He shall not go! What, one so old
Stand sentry in the snow and cold?"

"Hush boy; ye know not what ye say;
What 's toil to you, I deem but play;
The young bough bends before the breeze
Which only fans the toughened trees;
The frost, which nips the tender germ,
But makes the solid oak more firm
Does not the watch the father keep,
And guard his children while they sleep?"
So, leaving them with kindly words,
He grasped his gun, and joined the guards.

The ling'ring rays of latest day
Had fainter grown, then passed away:
And night had cast its shad'wy pall
Upon the snow clad earth; while all
The world around seemed strangely still.
Upon a bleak and barren hill
Covered with sparsely scattered wood,
Old Alf Bernard, grim, watching, stood.

There came an awful change: on high
Spread black the cloud-veil of the sky,
While madly howling winds rushed on,
From out the Storm King's frozen home.
The clouds were rent; the moon looked down
And for a moment shudd'ring shone,
Upon a wild and awful form—
The black mailed spectral of the storm;
His chariot wheels by tempests driven
Along the billowy waves of heaven;
His breath the forest maple rending;
The stubborn oak before him bending;

While crash on crash, from near and far,
Told the wild fury of the war.
A moment, and the veil was drawn ;
The rent clouds closed ; the moon was gone.
No summer lightnings flashed and fled,
Their momentary lustre shed,
But sable Darkness rolled his breath,
Black as the Stygian tide of death—
Black as the ebon cloud of gloom,
Which hangs forever o'er the tomb—
Black as God's anger-blackened pall,
Which hung in Pharo's rayless hall.
On through the gloom that hid the world,
The storm, resistless, rushing, whirled ;
Shrieked through the splintered branches, seeming
Like sea gulls o'er the tempest screaming ;
Bellowed afar, in sullen roar,
Like wild waves on a winter shore.
From angry clouds surcharged, the hail
Hurtled like spears on coats of mail,

Bearing along with icy breath,
Its hissing, driving waves of death,
Like war's mad missiles fiercely driven
Down from the battlements of heaven,
Until the forests rocked and reeled,
Like some shell-beaten battle-field.
Bird, beast, and man for refuge fled,
Or tarrying long were stricken dead.

But where is Alf? On that wild hill,
He stands amid the tempest still;
Benumbed with cold, and stunned with hail,
His long hair drifting on the gale.
Like some grim old baronial hall,
Proudly defiant in its fall
He stands; while through his clinched teeth
He mutters with spasmodic breath,—
"Never shall lying craven boast,
That Alf Bernard forsook his post!
Bernard fear death? Ha ha!——Ah, why
Should leafless trees regret to die!

A withered, fruitless trunk am I!
And when goes out this spark of fire,
This worthless breath,
No child—not one!—will call me sire,
And mourn my death."
Then o'er his mind delirium threw
A sudden maze,
And quick his fancy backward flew
To other days:

"——Ah where am I? How went the fight,
When I was wounded yesternight?
And tell me Surgeon: is it true
That all were slain except us two?—
Us two!—I do bethink me now,
You said that *she* was wounded! How,
Sir, tell me, tell how that could be!
I screened her from the enemy,—
'Twas not her blood but mine instead,
My blood which dyed her garments red,
Why tremble man? She is not dead—

Speak! Where is she? ——

"——Ah, where am I?
What dimness this upon my sight?
What demon voices screaming by? —
Now I bethink me: It is night—
I 'm old, and since that awful day,
Two score of years have passed away;
I 'm old! I have outlived my race;
They 're dead! My dying will efface
The name Bernard, for none will trace—
—Proud of a parent's history—
Their lineal glory back to me:
—Christ shrive me if regret be sin!—
This, had *she* lived, might not have been!
But that is in the stormy past!
I've lived a life of storms!—The blast
Drives mad, but none shall ever boast,
That Alf Bernard forsook his post.
My youth, my manhood, and my age,
Have only known the battle's rage,

And now, when silvery hairs o'erspread
This old and weather-beaten head,
Shall I, like paltry coward, mar
The little fame I've won in war,
And leave my post in wild alarm
To 'scape the fury of the storm,
Letting the foe, with sabre bared,
Pounce on the army unprepared,
And in his coward victory
Shriek the death knell of liberty!
Never! What! Death! Oh God, thy will"—
—The voice of the wind rose wild and shrill,
The whirlwind swept the barren hill;
Bnt over his form, so gray and old,
The tempest's breath, as it onward rolled,
A monody moaned through the trees, and told,
Like the solemn knell
Of a funeral bell,—
That Alf Bernard was dead!

'Twas morning, and the storm had flown ;
A sad and solemn monotone,
Of mournful voices, echoed well
The cadence of the tempest-knell.
Upon that wild storm beaten hill,
By morning's first gray dawn they'd found him ;
His flesh like frosted marble chill,
His mantle closely drawn around him.
He died, yet like a soldier died,
With trusty rifle by his side ;
And through his beard a woven sheen
Of silvery ice-drops formed a screen.
And there, in folds, the beaded sleet,
A glittering crystal winding sheet,
Enwrapped him in, and sparkling glowed
Upon him—lying straight and proud,
The stateliest knight in courtliest shroud.
And there were tears, where not a tear
Had gushed and gleamed for many a year ;
Tears, when with low, half stifled sound,

The whisper passed the camps around—
That Alf Bernard was dead—
'Twas hard to realize, and seemed
A bitter dream which they had dreamed.
All stately o'er the stately dead,
He came, the chief, and bowed his head,
And wept, long gazing in his face,
Who'd seemed the mentor of his race.
And, while thus lowly bending o'er,
He saw what none had seen before,—
Now scarcely seen—
Just peeping from the vesture fold,
A locket and a chain of gold
Of curious workmanship and old.
Then slow as 'twere a sacred thing,
He drew it forth; he touched the spring;
When lo! a lock of golden hair,
And a single word engraven there—
"Evangeline!"

They buried him, but not his name;
And often by the fitful light
Of camp fires, in the deep of night,
They told the story—how it came
That Alf Bernard was dead.

CANTO V.

PART I.

Accurs'd Oppression! born in deepest hell,
Where devils gathered round thee at thy birth;
Their song, thy natal song, was freedom's knell;
Which told thee prince imperial of the earth!

By what fell power, Oppression, hast thou reigned
For countless ages o'er a free-born race?

By what unlawful spell hast thou obtained
Man's meek submission, till thou dids't efface
Well nigh his liberty, first gift of God,
Bound him in chains, and ruled him with a rod?
With what demoniac spirit hast thou filled
His heart with lust of power and black ambition,
'Til nations trembled, when the tyrant willed,
And paved with skulls his pathway to position?
Man, man has done thy vilest deeds, for thou
Didst bribe him with the burning pledge of glory,
Saying.—"Go hide the Cain curse on thy brow,
Beneath a crown of gold; with song and story,
From servile lips of scared and cringing slaves,
O'erwhelm the orphan's sob and widow's wail;
Those Banquo shadows, so unearthly pale,
The restless ghosts of men untimely slain,
Which haunt thy double sight and fevered brain,
With burning hamlets' fast consuming waves,
Dispel; they ne'er will come again;

Then pile thy palaces above the graves
From whence they came! Be more than monarch—
god!
No longer live a brother of the clod!
Unlock the floodgates of the crimson flood,
And sail thy regal ship o'er seas of blood!"
Accurs'd Oppression! oh! what floods of tears,
Have left their tide-marks on the sands of years!
What groans come ringing through the vaults of time,
Where rolled thy crushing juggernaut of crime,
Along its flesh-paved way! Alas! for shame!
Too many ready Neroes hast thou found,
To emulate thy wrongs, to seek thy name,
To pile the fagots, and to light the flame,
Around the sacrifice of human souls:
Then, from their lofty eminence looking down,
Gloat o'er the devastation spread around;
Inhale soul-incense, as it upward rolls;
Feel deeper joy, with every deep'ning breath,
And glory in the moans and groans of death!

Ye CHRISTIAN Kings! Ye rulers, Heaven appointed,
With holy oil, by holier hands, anointed!
Just Kings! How God's approval must be given,
As, looking downward from the court of Heaven,
He sees a race beneath thy *justice* quake,
And thousands slaughtered for the *Savior's* sake!
How well ye hide your black apostacy
Beneath the shadow of Mount Calvary!
Where Philadelphia rears its friendly walls,
Oppression fed his hosts in marble halls,
With luxuries impressed by pillagers
In gay attire, from helpless villagers.
His well fed charges, champed in cheery stalls;
And there were feasts, and fetes, and festivals,
And wines, and women, and official balls;
The flashing epaulet; the gaudy dress;
The intricacies of the mazy dance;
The unallowed but unrebuked caress;
The snowy cover of licentousness;
Th' attempted loftiness of mein and glance,

Which marks the fool ; the glitter and the show
Of conquering soldiery, who deem the foe
No longer to be feared ; the low born song ;
The foe of freedom, and the friend of wrong ;
The tramp of veterans as they moved along ;
The boastful coward, joyful most to see
The sad accounts of death and misery
At Valley Forge ; the real Briton brave,
Wishing alone to see his banner wave
O'er what he deemed his own : all, all were there ;
The winter swept along with mirth and cheer ;
The present was a joy ; the future, bode no fear.

There comes a lull before the fiercest storms,
Which sweep in fury o'er the human soul,
Deep as the awful stillness which alarms
All nature to a listening hush, while forms
The black browed tempest, 'til beyond control,
The pent up lightnings burst, and deeply roll
The hollow thunders ; for, the springs of power
Are in the massive bands, which hold in check

Its cumulative force; 'til, in an hour,
It bursts its bonds, and drives the shapeless wreck
Of vast Armadas, o'er the plunging waves;
Or howls a hollow dirge above the graves
Of mariners, whose empty sails drooped o'er
The glassy waters, but an hour before.
Firm bound, 'neath granite hill and mountain band,
In vaults Plutonian, seas of fire and smoke
Expansive seethe, beneath the crust of land; —
Hush! What deep om'nous sound was that which broke
Upon the ear? Behold! the burning sky
Gleams blood-red, with the seething meteors, driven
From out some deep volcanic battery,
Upward, 'til lost within the canopy
Of sulphur smoke, which rolls along the heaven!
Than ocean waves more fearful, and more fleet,
The billowy land-swells rock beneath our feet;
Mountains new-born of earthquakes, from the womb

Of ocean, burst like giants strong, now free
From bonds, hurl back the billows of the sea,
Which, frightened, flee to give the monsters room ;
And high, through mantling smoke, they darkly loom.
Others, whose summits have remain'd untrod,
Save when they trembled to the tread of God,
Tremble and shake, as though an awful doom
Hangs over them ; they totter, reel, and nod,
And toppling downward, with one hollow boom,
They sink forever in an ocean tomb ;
And ocean comes: the awful vortex fills,
Where cities, boastful of their eternal hills,
Had gleamed, the glory of the granite shore,
In rapt security an hour before—
In rapt security ! That haughty host,
So boastful of their triumph o'er the foe,
May find the very powers, of which they boast,
Are but deceitful bands, which bind below,
A deep volcanic force ; a freeman's hate ;

And yet may find, but find, when all too late,
Themselves, their pride, their hope, their power entombed,
In the dark depths to which their foes were doomed:
Their foes, victorious, o'er apparent fate,
May yet to freedom rise, if patiently they wait.
Muffled the drums, and slow their solemn tread,
Who daily followed, to the silent tomb,
The forms emaciate of the patriot dead;
While, o'er the camp, a darker pall of gloom,
With each expiring life, was still more deeply spread.
How silently they walked, nor murmured!—still,
In tell-tale lines, by oft recurrence worn,
This thought was writ, upon their faces chill:
"Who bears to-day, to-morrow may be borne,
To swell those silent ranks upon the hill,
To lengthen out those long, fast-lengthening lines
Of mounded graves, where Winter's banner shines."
Disease and Famine brooded o'er the camp;

Through tent and hospital, from night to night,
They moved, like ghosts, and bore a spectral lamp ;
And wheresoe'er they threw th' unearthly light,
The throbbing heart stood still ; the spirit took its flight.
How suff'ring clogs the weary wheels of time!
When life is buoyant as a summer's cloud,
Its days as quickly pass. Man in his prime
Of hope, and energy, and strength, ere bowed
By sore calamity, or years, exclaims : —
"How swift the moments come, and coming go!
How fast our bubbles down the river flow!
How quick our joys consume within thy flames,
O, ever present Now!—thou torchlight, burning
Along existence' thread, and quickly turning
All things to ashes : Stay! ye fleeting crowd
Of sunbeam moments, let me linger still,
And draw, from swelling life, a deeper thrill,
Ere yet I totter down the steep'ning hill,
Until, by weight of years and sorrow bowed,

Death wraps me in the mantle of a shroud!
O! stay yet longer, envied moments, stay!
Draw not night's shadows o'er my manhood's day,
I ask none better, haste thou not away!"
But oh! how heavy roll the burdened wheels,
As time his weary journey moves along,
To him who looks, and longs, but only feels
The weight of misery, and curse of wrong:
As, all alone,
In his cell of stone,
Mouldy, and cold, and dark, where moan
The hollow winds, through the iron bars,—
He watches the coming of sun, and stars:
He counts the moons as they wax and wane,
And longs for their coming and going again;
And he marks them down on the limestone floor,
Or on the wall,
Where the dim rays fall,
With a rusted bolt, which he madly tore
From the pitiless sides of the iron door,

When it shut him in, long years before:
And there for hours he often stands,
Or crouching down on his bony hands,
He counts those worn lines, one by one,
That tell of the changes of moon and sun;
He groans, when his work is done, and then,
Commences and counts them o'er again,
Comparing the past with the future, to see
How much longer, alas! the years will be,
'Til they drag the weary months away,
And let him out to the light of day:—
Thus slowly wore the weeks away, to those
Besieged by famine, and relentless snows;
Until their wasted forms to shadows grew;
'Till every icy tempest chilled them through;
With hollow eyes, they watched the changeful skies;
Alas! they saw but wilder storms arise.
Wide flew the dove of hope o'er wintry track,
But all was waste, and hunger drove it back.
Dark brooding on the future, there appeared

No ray of hope, to light the deep'ning gloom,
No hand, to save them from the fate they feared,
To snatch the army from a common tomb,
Or rescue Freedom from impending doom.

PART II.

Jehovah sat upon the throne of Heaven;
And round about a mingled company
Of glowing Saraphim, and Cherubim;
And, all in robes of white, the radient host
Of spirits, ransomed from a world of sin,—
A multitude innumerable stood.

And there were harpers with their golden harps,
And while they swept the sweet accordant strings,
Until the tremulous atmosphere of heaven
Seem'd throbbing with harmonious melodies,
An anthem of eternal praise they sang,
Which, swelling, closed with one triumphant burst
Of:—"Hallelujah! Blessed be our King!"

And close beside the throne, a radiant throng,
Of infant choiristers, their voices raised,
In songs of silvery tenderness, and cried; —
"Forever blessed be the Lamb of God,
Sweet Lamb of love, who loving, died for us!"

Then, from the host of saints, arose the song: —
"Oh holy, holy, holy, Holy Ghost!
Thou Comforter! to Thee be endless praise!"

And then the harpers, choristers, and saints,
In one grand swell of mingled symphonies,
Which rolled its cadence to the distant hills,
Where flows through waving green the river Life;
Or o'er yon mountains, on whose shining tops
Concentered rays of heavenly halo hang;
Or farther e'en, to where the gates of pearl
Shine, crystal guards, on Zion's utmost bound; —
Thus sang: "Eternal God! Most holy One!
The burning orbs which mirror back thy light,
Throughout the dreary wastes of endless space;
The bended vast concave of ether sea;

The holy hills of Zion, round about;
And all the countless host before thy throne:
Sing:—'Holy, holy, blest forever be
The Triune God!' and hallelujahs raise,
To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

Lo! like an echo, from the crystal depths
Of most melodious waters, wafted back
Across its parent harps' reverbrant strings,
The seeming echo of their cadent song,
Came floating from the distant pearly gates!
And through those gates, a soft effulgence rose,
As tho' it were a star, all coronate,
And tress'd with liquid lines of amber light.
And now, more nearly drawn, it took the form
Of constellated spirits, each a star,
Which shone from out the nebula of light,
Like those which twinkle through the golden hair,
Of her, the bright Aurora of the north.
It grew in brilliance, coming still more near,
With beams of glory flashing from the throne,

As wand'ring stars approaching to the sun,
Do clothe themselves in his effulgent rays.
And wafted onward came its melodies,
Like distant, changeful chimes, or like wild notes
Of unseen harps suspended in the air,
Whose chords the fingers of the wind do sweep,
With ever varying sound; now breathing soft
As angel's lullaby to sleeping babe;
Now swelling onward in crescendo grand,
Of mingled symphonies, 'til e'en the sky
Seems resonant of sound; and now again
To limpid whispers falls, as sweet as though
'Twere breathed on roses from the lips of June.
Thus through the "portals of eternal day,"
Came Liberty and her attendant host,
Of spirits ministrant, and now before
Th' Almighty's throne she stood, and in a voice
Which thrilled them all with sympathy, who heard,
The goddess thus began:—

" God, sceptered, crowned
With attributes and powers all thine own ;
Upon whose will dependent rests the sphere
Of all create existences ! Thou God,
Of love and justice the exhaustless source,
Bow down thine ear to me, and hear my prayer !
In yonder orb, called Earth, from whence I come,
Thy children weep,—the ones thou gavest me
To bear the banner of my cause, and smite
The dragon of oppression to his death.
Oh ! when thy spirit o'er the waters flew,
And deeply brooded o'er chaotic night,
Didst thou not promise me yon budding earth
A fair inheritance, where I might reign ?
Oppression rules ! Beneath his pond'rous tread,
He crushes all who would espouse my cause ;
Upon the shrine of freedom, he would rear
A palace, built of skeletons concrete ;
Would clothe himself in gold and purple robe s
Be-diamonded with crystal human tears ;

And, through distended nostrils, deeply draw
The incense smoke of freemen offered up.
Far from their homes, in trackless wilds of snow,
Where stern despotic winter, throned in ice,
And mantled in gray clouds and driving storms,
Proclaims with tempest breath his regal sway,
Thy sons, the brave defenders of my cause,
Now famish, weep, and die! Oh, hollow eyes!
Oh, ghostly forms! Oh, living skeletons!
Oh, bitterness of cherished hopes deferred!
O prayers and tears of mothers for their sons!
O doom of freedom darkling o'er the land!
In spirit essence all invisible,
I moved throughout the camp at dead of night;
I bent above them sleeping, heard their prayers
As in deep moans they called upon thy name;
Saw briny tears roll down their fevered cheeks,
Like bitter waters in a thirsty land.
Some spoke of liberty, and some in dreams,
Which mocked them waking, talked of balmy spring;

Some shivering sat by fires, nor slept; and some
Lay staring through the rayless darkness—dead!
And must they perish all, and I be driven
A fugitive from mine inheritance?
Oh! burden'd with their woes and prayers, I come,
And bow a suppliant before thy throne,
Stretch forth thy hand, Great God, in their behalf!"
She ceased, as kneeling there, and ardent looked
Angelic pleadings on the face divine.
Then soft eyed Pity, wrapped in robes of love,
Bowed low her head and wept, and weeping cried,
In tremulous tones of touching tenderness:
"O Father! hear ye what our sister says,
And let me fly to yonder world of woe,
And stooping, softly, where thy children weep,
Pour floods of soothing tears upon their hearts."
And sterner Justice, o'er whose marble face,
The limned lines, of vengeance and of love,
Were blent in most symmetric harmony:—
"Hear God the evidence our sister brings,

And in sweet Pity's company let me,
Thy messenger as well, thy vengeance bear;
And pour upon the dark accursed throng,
Who crush thy struggling children to the earth,
The terrors of thy wrath!" Then Charity,
The sweet embodiment of tenderness,
Of loving kindness and beneficence:
"Send me with manna from the ports of Heaven,
To feed thy starving sons!" And beaming Hope,
With eyes, the mirrors of the countless tints
Of beauties and of joys ineffible:—
"O Father! let me go, and touch their lips,
With honey from the future's blooming flowers;
Across their clammy foreheads warmly breathe,
The vernal breath of sweet florescent May;
Or, lifting up the veil which clouds their sight,
Display the sheen of glories yet to be!"

Jehovah spake, and silence reigned in Heaven,
Nor make, my humble pen, the vain attempt
To clothe with words the voice of Majesty!

As well essay to light, with taper's blaze,
The dazzling sun, around his burning path;
To pluck Orion from his mount of stars,
And hurl him headlong down the hollow sky;
Or pierce with human ken Creation's depths.

Jehovah spake! Then quick the joyful song,
From out the goddess sisters' lips arose: —
"We thank Thee, O Omnipotence and Love!
For Thou hast heard our humble orisons!
And now, with benedictions on our flight,
We go, we go, thy ministers to Earth."

'Twas solemn midnight, and the patriot camp
In darkness deep, lay silent as the tomb.
As though some angel presence had passed by,
And on those troubled hearts pour'd soothing balm,
Sleep, such as comes when grief and gushing tears
Have shorn the mourner of her power to mourn;
Sleep, gendered in a lullaby of sobs,
Stole softly down, and wrapped them in repose.
On downy couches of forgetfulness,

They lay relaxed, when o'er their senses fell,
As 't were, a subtle sweetness, which distilled
A fragrance like the breath of vernal flowers.
Like silvery sunshine through a rifted cloud,
A sudden radiance rent the veil of night,
And then, in spirit beauties, hid from view
Save through the wond'rous psychoscope of dreams,
Lo! beaming Hope appear'd, on buoyant wings,
Half hid behind a roseate veil of mist,
And stooping low began:—

"Oh mortal man!
Let not despair destroy the germs of hope!
The sun which set in clouds will rise again;
These snows will melt, the winter pass away,
And spring will deck the hills in robes of green;
Nor deem thy trials are but barrenness;
Beneath the snow, a thousand seeds lie hid
All frozen in the earth, and yet, the cold
Is Nature's key which turns the springs of life;
Frost bursts the shell which binds the helpless germ,

So from thy very sufferings, shall bloom
Perennial flowers in thy history;
Though nights grow darker, trim the lamp of hope!
And wouldst thou see the future? — then behold!"
Lo! from the soft horizon of their dreams,
Arose a temple with a thousand spires
Which shot their airy shafts far up the heaven,
And on each pinnacle a crown of stars,
While over all a bow of promise bent.
Around the temples base, a thousand doors
Broad, high and ample; all were opened wide,
And over each was written: "Liberty!"
From out its portals issued floods of light,
And, frightened by its beams, Oppression fled,
As Night, black outlaw from the realm of day,
Dark browed and scowling flies the morning sun.
"Enough!" said Hope, "Nor seek to look beyond!
Enough hast thou already seen, if thou
Dost rightly read this riddle which I give: —
'Who longs for morning must await the dawn.'"

The vision passed away. The morning broke.
Fierce Winter still proclaimed his regal sway,
With tenfold furies howling down the blast.
And were their hopes enkindled but to die,
And leave them deeper in despair? Ah no!
For like a wounded lion's frenzied throes,
Most terrible in agony of death,
The hollow voices of the lashing storm,
Were but the angry Winter's dying groans.
He lay among the ruins of his throne,
Which slowly wore away, a ghastly corpse.
Each coming day unlocked a door of ice,
Through which the smiling Spring passed softly in.
Each coming day brought Plenty's bounteous horn,
And laughed to see gaunt Famine put to flight.
Until, at shrill of fife and roll of drum,
This remnant of an army marched away,
From what to them had been a living tomb;
Yet solemnly they marched, oft looking back,
With wistful gaze, upon those silent graves

All formed like lines of battle on the hill,
As if to look a long and sad "Farewell!"

A TRIBUTE.

They're gone, all gone! The heroic braves
Sleep sweetly in the patriots' graves;
Their deeds live on, and brighter still
Shall gleam like gems in song and story,
When others lose their power to thrill,
And fades the brilliance of their glory.
By hands like theirs, by such alone
Was shaped the broad foundation stone,
Upon which firmly rests to-day
The fabric of our Liberty.
And Valley Forge! thy deathless name
Shall quickly kindle Freedom's flame,
Long as black Tyranny appears,
To blight the peace of coming years.

Miscellaneous Poems.

DEATH IN A GARRET.

"Lowly the taper burns;
Slowly the index turns,
Pointing toward twelve on the old dial plate.
Wildly the cold winds blow;
Strangely they come and go,
Whirling the dust in the fireless grate.

"Winds of the winter night,
Whirling the snow so white,
In through the broken pane on to my bed!
Cold is their breath to me,
Symbol of death to me,
With frost they'll enshroud my form when I'm dead!

"Like very demons, they
Come, and they shriek and say,
'Die all alone, and we'll turn you to stone!
We'll howl a dirge over you!
Cobwebs shall cover you,
'Til rats gnaw the thin wasted flesh from the bone

"On the cold barren wall
Ghostly dim shadows fall,—
Fall as they darker grow, form'd of the night;
Devils they seem to me,
Fiend like they gleam on me,—
Fiends are they—devils they, choking the light

"In the bright morn of youth,
Virtue I loved, and Truth,
But the foul tempter came, me to decoy;
Oh! in those vanishd years,
Saw I my mother's tears,
Heard I her prayers for her recreant boy.

"Out on a sinful sea
Sail'd I so thoughtlessly,—
Sail'd on, nor heeded her cries to her child.
Storms arose; billows toss'd;
Soon my frail bark was lost,—
Wreck'd in a whirlpool of passion so wild.

"All of my hopes are dead;
On this cold, cheerless bed,—
Cheerless and cold as a pallet of snow,
While my pulse weaker grows,
And my blood slower flows—
Slow where it once was wont quickly to flow;

"Here I lie waiting death,
Watching my parting breath;
Soon my dark soul into darkness will go,
Out from a world of moans,
Into a realm of groans;
Fleeing from grief into limitless woe!

"To-morrow, to-morrow I
Know that the passers by,
Looking up never will dream of my fate;
Never will dream that I
Lone and unguarded lie, —
Dead!—'neath the dome of this building so great."

"Twelve by the dial plate—
Ah, but it strikes but eight!
And the pendulum stops!"—But his spirit had fled
As the winds whirl'd the snow about,
Whiffing the taper out; —
And Darkness, grim Darkness, watch'd over the dead.

EPITAPH ON A NOSE.*

"Tread lightly; bow the knee" and weep! for here
Is one o'er whom has trickled many a tear,
From eyes that e'en in life were always near,
And now they gaze in grief upon his *bier.*
And be this known among his crowning merits,
That e'en in life and death he kept in *spirits;*
'This a more *striking* fact to him who knows,
This nose in life was always used to *blows:*
A warrior bold, he always led the *van;*
His *red flag* gleamed where *sanguine* currents ran:
Disdaining fear he stood upon the *brink*
And saw his fierce and *fiery spirits* sink;
He bended o'er their wasting forms in death,
And only left them with their latest *breath.*
Into the *jaws* of *sin* and death he fell,
And now his *brand*(i)*ed* body sleeps in——Stop!
I don't mean there, but in a doctor's shop.

*A drunken fellow had his nose bitten off by another drunkard. A physician securing it, preserved it in a bottle of Alcohol. The above is supposed to have been inscribed on the bottle.

STANZAS.

Though the billowy waves of temptation roll o'er me,
And bear me far out on the tempest-toss'd sea,
I'll keep thee, my beacon light, ever before me,
And return on the flood-tide to safety and thee.

Though the strings of my harp be unravell'd and broken,
Though silent my lyre, its chords all unstrung,
Though the praise of my verse be forever unspoken,
Though the songs of the world must by others be sung;

My music shall be from the winds of the mountain,
In the thunders' sub-bass rolling on through the gloom,
In the gurgling trill of the bubbling fountain,
In the roar of the ocean, and meteor's boom.

THE SCOTCHMAN'S SLED-RIDE.

Ha, ha! Ha, ha! The Winter 's past;
He 's ta'en awa his robes o' snow,
Nae mair we feel his chillin blast;
Nae mair his icy tempests blow;
He 's gane: We're glad to see him go.

I took my wee sma' bairn one day,
And in my sled I went to town,
'Twas pleasant as the month o' May,
But soon the slashin' sleet came down,
And we 'd nae robes to wrap us round.

Oh! then it was a sight to see
The sorry plight that we were in—
That is, I mean my bairn and me—

Our coats and breeks they were sae thin,
The sleet cut nearly thro' the skin.

I clapp'd my hands, and held my ears,
And swinged my horse and stamp'd my toes,
My e'es were fill'd wi' frozen tears;
But what was worse, my wayward nose
Ran ahead thro' the wind, and got a' froze, —
It's always colder when it blows.

My simperin' bairn grew blue wi' cauld,
And fill'd his bonny e'e wi' tears;
Straight out his chubby hands did hold,
But ah, the frostie nipp'd his ears! —
Those little flaps wi' whic' he hears.

Then, oh, ye crags o' rock and ice!
How ye resounded to his yellin!
I tried to soothe him wi' a' device,
But ah, the brawlin mood he'd fell in,
Was past a mortal's power o' tellin!

And even at our journey's end,
Tho' warm the fire he yell'd and kicked
We thaw'd his ears sae they would bend,
But still he cried, and him I licked;
'Tis strange, 'tis strange the boy's sae wicked!

And yet, I've heard my mother say
That even I, when young was bad;
But a' my badness flew awa',
And so I wot this blastit lad
Will be a great man,—like his dad.

But now guide luck, the winter's past;
He's ta'en awa' his robes o' snow,
Nae more we feel his chillin' blast;
Na' mair his icy tempests blow;
He's gang—we're glad to see him go.

PARAPHRASE

ON AN ANCIENT BELIEF.

Darkness had mantled the forests with gloom,
And the winds murmured plaintively low;
Through the vaulted blue sky rose the crescent crown'd moon,
And she rode o'er Meridia's highway of noon,
And went down in the waters of woe.

In the waters of woe she went down and was drown'd,
And they put out the light of her eyes;
Alas, that the heavens should suffer such wound!
Such a beautiful goddess be hurled to the ground,
Like a jewel pluck'd out of the skies.

Oh Cynthia! Cynthia! Queen of the Night,
And heaven bless'd bride of the World!
Thou hast swept through the stars with thy garments of white,
And fill'd the dark valleys of earth with thy light,
When the banners of Phœbus were furl'd.

Thou art gone! We have seen thy long silver robes sweep
Down the meteor's path to the West;
And thy tresses are toss'd by the waves of the deep,
And the mournful Æolus has lull'd thee to sleep,
As he sighs o'er the billowy crest.

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